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ABSTRACT

This guide for managers of distance education programs consists of five chapters, each with its own appendix. Chapter 1 considers characteristics of good distance educators, possible sources of instructors, and limitations in recruiting instructors. The appendix to this chapter outlines the recruiting process followed at a particular academic institution. Chapter 2 discusses how program staff can get instructors started on the right track, kinds of helpful information that can be provided about the program and about distance education in general, and contract creation. The appendix contains examples of program information, suggestions for reading, and sample course development contract. Chapter 3 addresses the course development process, including the role of course development staff, use of course author manuals, and working with media specialists, review personnel, and credentialing agencies. The appendix contains a list of course authors' manuals, sample diagram for the course development process, two samples of course formats, and a course evaluation form. Chapter 4 focuses on fostering good teaching at a distance through expressing clear expectations and solving instructor problems such as course overload, slow turnaround of assignments, and difficulty in creating/maintaining dialogue with students. The appendix contains sample information provided to teachers and suggestions for establishing a good instructor-student dialogue. Chapter 5 discusses using course evaluations and student feedback in the course revision process, dealing with problem instructors, and rewarding innovation and excellence. Sample course evaluation forms are appended. (YLB)

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Managing Distance Education Courses

Elizabeth Houdek

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The Guide Series

in Continuing Education

A publication prepared by the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Managing Distance Education Courses

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Foreword

Elizabeth Houdek's logical and thorough treatment of this subject grows from her recognized expertise and experience. She has taken each aspect of an ongoing process and examined it in detail, providing checklists and other "how-to" suggestions. As reviewers of this publication have indicated, her guide will be invaluable for those beginning to work in this area and will be an excellent ongoing reference.

In addition to comprehensive coverage of this subject, a wealth of material is presented in the appendix to each chapter, including a list of additional sources of information. Throughout this guide, Ms. Houdek stresses the importance of sound working relationships with instructors and the elements in those relationships.

This guide is one of several addressing aspects of distance education. In this series are publications for students, for people preparing courses, and for those responsible for the overall management of distance education programs. Each guide has been prepared to share experience and suggest proven methods for developing and sustaining effective programs.

Charles E. Kozoll
Editor
Guide Series

About the Author

Elizabeth Houdek is the Instructional Materials Editor of the Independent Study Program at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. Ms. Houdek earned a bachelor's degree in English at Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, and a master's degree in communications at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. She has ten years' experience as an instructional materials editor and has given numerous presentations on course design and faculty development. She is active in the National University Continuing Education Association Division of Independent Study.

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Introduction

I found the course to be interesting and was particularly pleased with instruction on a one-to-one basis.

I was very aggravated to receive my "graded" lessons. I don't believe they were read, and no comments were ever given pertaining to being on the right track, needed improvement, etc. When a professor is not interested in helping students, I see no reason why he/she should teach.

As these comments from independent study students indicate, managers of distance education programs must do more than recruit students and prepare instructional materials for them to use. The other essential element is the course instructor. What distinguishes "self-study" from "self-teaching" is the one-to-one tutorial relationship between student and instructor. When the chemistry of the relationship is right, teaching and learning at a distance is a challenging, exciting, and ultimately deeply satisfying experience. When the chemistry is wrong, the result is boredom, frustration, a high noncompletion rate, and a lot of negative feelings about the program.

This guide is intended to help you promote "good chemistry" in your program by getting and keeping self-study course instructors who are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, committed, and well prepared. Many of the examples and suggestions in this guide come from experienced distance education course administrators. Not every technique works in every situation, but the information presented here should provide a good beginning point. And if you are one of those experienced administrators, perhaps you will find some new idea to use in your program or the answer to some particular problem.

Before we begin, a note about terminology: in the context of this guide, the term *distance education* program or course means an instructional system that is under the control of some sponsoring organization in which instructors and students are separated in time and space, but maintain an ongoing relationship with one another through various communication media. The instruction may culminate in the earning of some form of formal credit or it may be entirely credit-free.

Some of the topics we will consider are:

1. ***Recruiting good instructors***—what makes a good distance education instructor, matching the characteristics of the course and the instructor, finding sources for instructors, and some factors that may limit your choice of instructors

2. ***Orientation***—how your program staff can get instructors started on the right track, kinds of helpful information you can provide about your program and about distance education in general, communicating clear expectations, and creating contracts

3. ***Supporting the course development process***—the role of the course editor–designer; using course authors' manuals; working with outside resources, curriculum committees, and academic departments; credentialing bodies; and solving problems before they get into print or onto tape

4. ***Supporting the instructional process***—providing clear and consistent policies and procedures, problem-solving techniques, and on-going support services

5. ***Evaluating courses and instructors***—using course evaluations and student feedback in the course revision process, dealing with problem instructors, and rewarding innovation and excellence

Chapter 1
Recruitment

Chapter 1
Recruitment

Chapter 2
Orientation

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Supporting the Course Development Process

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Supporting Teaching at a Distance

Chapter 5
Evaluation

> *The instructor was obviously interested in how I performed and his information was quite helpful to me.*

This student's comment epitomizes the instructor we would all like to have for every course in our distance education programs. However, as most program administrators are painfully aware, such instructors do not usually just walk into our offices and volunteer their services.

Recruiting good instructors for writing and teaching courses is not an exact science: like all people-related enterprises, it involves a considerable element of intuition. The information in this chapter is intended as a general guide to the process; each program will adopt sources and strategies that fit its particular needs and constraints. In the information that follows, the term *instructor* is used to mean *both* those who write course materials and those who teach the courses. Depending upon your program, these tasks may be done by different people, or the same person may both write and teach the course.

We will consider some characteristics of good "distance educators," some possible sources of instructors, and some of the limitations you may encounter in recruiting. The appendix to this chapter outlines the general recruiting process for one program.

The "Ideal" Instructor

Who is the "ideal" instructor of distance education courses? The ideal is someone whose personal characteristics best match the needs of the program and its students. For example, if you are offering an undergraduate-level academic course in psychology, the instructor needs to have academic credentials and some experience with students at that level. If, however, you are offering a course dealing with new tax laws for a group of bankers, you might want to look for an instructor with a background in government, banking, or accounting.

Nevertheless, because of the nature of distance education, it is useful to think in terms of certain characteristics or competencies that can guide your recruiting process:

1. Ability to write clearly and to distinguish between writing for peers and writing for students. Teaching at a distance depends upon written communication. Students learning at a distance need to have a sense of

"personality" from the writing, a feeling that there is a live human being mediating between them and the course content. Therefore, the writing needs to be conversational, rather than academic or bureaucratic. If a potential instructor does not have a lot of writing experience or is marginally deficient in writing skills, he or she need not be automatically eliminated from consideration, but your program should have enough editorial or course development resources to assist the individual.

2. Knowledge of subject and enthusiasm for the teaching–learning process. This and writing skills are the two critical characteristics for a good distance education instructor. The other characteristics which are listed below are marks of a flexible and open personality—the kind that even without prior experience is likely to develop into a good distance education instructor.

3. Willingness and ability to create and maintain written dialogue with students. Writing good course material is only half of the distance teaching process. The essential other half is sustaining the tutorial relationship between instructor and student through written comments on the student's work and responses to questions.

4. Ability to anticipate questions and problems and provide solutions. Students who are not in the classroom cannot stop the instructor to ask a question or request clarification. Instructors who are sensitive to the most frequently asked questions can provide the necessary explanations in the written material, saving students some time and frustration.

5. Willingness to deal with students on an adult-to-adult basis, recognizing skills and experiences students bring to the learning situation. The majority of students in distance education programs are over the age of twenty-five, and most have a variety of life experiences, including families, jobs, and community involvement. The instructor who projects an attitude of authoritarian omniscience will foster dislike or discouragement in students—which is not an asset to your program.

6. Commitment to distance education program policies and procedures, that is, observing deadlines, following directions, scheduling adequate time for distance education activities. This is a characteristic you can't always determine before you recruit an instructor, but clear expectations and simple procedures can prevent many problems.

7. Willingness to consider nonprint forms of instruction (if appropriate to your program) and to cooperate with media specialists in producing such materials. The key here is "willingness"—it is part of the flexibility and enthusiasm mentioned above. Indeed, the opportunity to work with nonprint media may be a factor that attracts instructors.

All other factors being equal, the instructor who becomes a successful and satisfied distance educator is a person who is knowledgeable but not authoritarian, is flexible and imaginative, and enjoys the one-to-one engagement of the student's mind with his or her own.

Organizational Factors in Recruitment

Several other key factors affect your recruitment strategies. They can represent restrictions on whom you may recruit, or they can suggest some previously untapped pool of potential instructors.

Program Size

Is your program a large one with a wide variety of different types of courses, or a small program specializing in only one subject area? Sometimes the size of a program affects the amount of funding available for instruction. For example, if funding for support activities such as orientation and editorial support is small, you may have to look for more experienced instructors who will need a minimum of assistance to begin the writing–teaching process.

Administrative Structure

If your program has a sponsoring institution, there may be restrictions on using instructors from outside the institution. If your program has courses in only one subject area, you may have to recruit your instructors from a small group of people who are specialists in the subject. Equal opportunity and affirmative action programs will probably have a significant effect on your recruiting efforts, both in terms of the sources you use and the choices you make among a pool of applicants.

Job Expectation

Are you recruiting a course author (writer) or a course instructor, or is one person expected to do both? The characteristics of the person you recruit may be different, depending on the nature of the task. You also need to consider the technological level of the course: Does the instructor need to be experienced with instructional media such as audiotape or videotape, computers, or broadcast media?

Characteristics of Instructors

Is an instructor expected to be primarily a "content" expert or a "process" expert? Again, this relates to the task and the level of assistance available from your program staff. In a program that is not based in an academic institution, you may find individuals with a high level of knowledge about antiques, tax policies, and so forth, but little or no experience in sharing that

knowledge with others. Your program will probably have to provide the expertise to help your "content expert" translate that subject knowledge into effective instruction.

You may also deal with the opposite situation if, for example, you are developing a course around a television series or a similar, already produced source. In that case, you may look for an instructor with strong "interpretative" skills to help students make sense of the content they are seeing or reading.

Characteristics of Students

What is the demographic profile of your students? If your program serves a multiethnic, multicultural student population or a special population such as incarcerated students, you will want to recruit instructors who are comfortable with that type. Conversely, if your students have relatively homogeneous characteristics, you will probably look for an instructor with somewhat similar characteristics, assuming that other factors allow you to make the choice.

Sources of Instructors

Once you have a general idea of the kind of instructor needed, where do you begin to look for that person? Just as in any other search for employees, there are both formal and informal sources.

If your program is based in an academic institution, your instructors are likely to be recruited from among the institution's faculty or from adjunct instructors who are approved by the various academic departments. If your program is self-supporting and freestanding, you might recruit your instructors from professionals in the subject area of the course.

In most academic institutions, recruiting an instructor may be a relatively formal process involving a request to a specific department or to a dean's office. In a nonacademic situation, the nature of the course may dictate what channels you can use to recruit an instructor. For example, a course that can be used toward some professional certification may require an instructor with specific qualifications, in which case you may need to work through the certifying agency to obtain a qualified person.

There are also informal sources, such as peer networks, that can be fruitful sources for recruiting. Keeping current with the literature in the field of distance education or with subject information sources is a good way to find out "who is doing what." Sometimes this can lead to ideas for new courses, as well as provide sources for instructors. A distance education administrator with a wide range of contacts in educational organizations and

in his or her community is in the best position to tap into the informal sources. And don't forget the distance educators already teaching for your program—word-of-mouth recruiting by an enthusiastic instructor can be your most fruitful source of new talent.

At one university, six faculty members are chosen each year by a process that begins with student nominations for "University Professors." One of the rewards of being selected is the chance to teach a course of one's own design. Because of timely contacts between those instructors and the director of the distance education program, several of the University Professor courses have become successful distance education courses.

Another example is a remarkable course in deaf language and culture, which grew out of a series of workshops for persons in sales and public service professions to help them understand and communicate with hearing-impaired people. An imaginative faculty member at the local college helped this energetic and committed instructor turn her workshops into college courses and eventually put her in touch with the distance education program. A coordinated effort among the instructor, the distance education program, and the university's educational telecommunications facility produced a course that neatly integrated print materials, videotape, and the instructor's feedback to students into a highly effective way to reach students who could not take the course in a classroom setting.

Written information about your program can be a potent recruiting tool. Catalogs, brochures, and news releases can attract potential instructors as well as students, especially if your program is perceived as one that can help solve problems for students or help instructors reach a wider audience. Many institutionally based programs routinely send copies of their information to all instructors and key administrators every year.

Limitations to the Recruiting Process

The limitations you may encounter in recruiting instructors are generally of two types: institutional and situational.

Institutional limitations are more common in academic distance education programs. These may include problems of teaching overload, departments appointing someone other than the person you want for your program, or qualified instructors who are unable or unwilling to work for your program. Nonacademic programs may encounter problems with finding enough funds to attract qualified writers–instructors or with outside agencies controlling the pool of qualified instructors. Sometimes there is little you can do about institutional limitations; sometimes some careful politicking over a period of time can change the situation.

Situational limitations include conflicts of time, instructors lacking access to facilities for writing or teaching the course, or instructors who are unwilling to follow established procedures. Sometimes these limitations do not appear until *after* an instructor has been recruited, but these factors will probably account for the largest share of your instructor turnover.

If you view recruiting as *an ongoing process* you may find it much less frustrating—very few of us have the luxury of having instructors whose only job is working for our programs. One element of that process might be maintaining communication with instructors who are already working with your program. Let them know how valuable they are and ask their help in finding other people who might be interested in teaching for your program. Another step is to identify those who teach courses you would like to add to your curriculum (especially if yours is an institutionally based program) and send them information about your program or contact them informally. Not every contact will be successful, but sometimes a person who declines your first request to teach will later change his or her mind. Doing all that you can to build a strong program that serves your students well will encourage instructors to work with you. After all, everyone wants to be associated with a "winner."

Appendix to "Recruiting"

The following outline describes the recruiting process in the distance education program at Ohio University. Because this program is based in an academic institution, some steps in the process may not apply to freestanding programs. Recruitment is a two-pronged program for us—we recruit not only instructors, but courses as well.

Step 1. We identify a need either for developing a new course or for revising an existing course.

Step 2. Courses in this program carry resident university credit, so all course offerings in the distance education program must have the approval of the appropriate academic department. The department chairperson is contacted by memo or telephone call to request permission to develop or revise the course.

Step 3. At the same time, we request departmental approval of an instructor. If it is an existing course and the present instructor is willing to do the revision, approval is usually just a formality. In the case of a new course, we may have already identified an instructor and will seek approval for that person; otherwise, we will ask the department chairperson for assistance in finding an instructor. In

rare cases, an instructor may approach us with a suggestion for a course. In that case, we will ask the instructor to contact the department for approval.

Step 4. Once we have received verbal or written approval from the department for both the course and the instructor, we will contact the instructor and arrange for a meeting with the instructional materials editor.

Our instructors are almost always regular faculty members of the university; because the university has several regional campuses, faculty members may be drawn from those campuses as well as from the main campus. Adjunct faculty members are rare and are usually approved only if the course requires some special expertise not usually found in the sponsoring department. One example is the security and safety management curriculum, where the course writers are government or corporate security–safety professionals.

If a change of instructors is needed in an existing course, we first ask the present instructor to suggest someone to take over the course. This peer network has generally worked well for us.

We use information about our program as an informal recruiting tool. Every year we send a copy of our course catalog and a letter to each department chairperson; this helps advisors when they are dealing with students and may suggest new courses for development.

We also try to make arrangements for distance students to take courses not routinely offered in our program. Sometimes a number of requests for the same course will prompt a department to consider making it a regular course in our program.

A distance education program that is not based in an academic institution will have to tap into other networks and sources for instructors. These sources can include accrediting or certifying bodies for particular subjects, and community or regional schools, colleges, or technical–vocational schools. Announcements or advertisements for programs or workshops may help to identify key resource people in a particular field. In these situations, the resume or curriculum vitae, contact with references, and personal interviews are important in the process of recruiting and selecting instructors. Again, the director of a well-focused, well-developed distance education program is in the best position to attract successful instructors.

Chapter 2
Orientation

Chapter 1
Recruitment

Chapter 2
Orientation

Chapter 3
Supporting the Course Development Process

Chapter 4
Supporting Teaching at a Distance

Chapter 5
Evaluation

> *Independent study is a recognized and indispensable part of American education.* (Standards of the Division of Independent Study of the National University Continuing Education Association, revised 1989).

Now that you have recruited a course instructor who is knowledgeable and enthusiastic, you want to provide experiences for the instructor that will encourage sensitivity to the distance learner and commitment to the process of teaching in a nonclassroom situation. Orientation activities are the first step in helping instructors achieve those goals.

We can distinguish two major elements of orientation: philosophical and practical. The philosophical element is the information you provide to help your instructor understand the nature of distance teaching and learning, the needs of students, and the particular approach your program takes to distance education. The practical element might also be called the "housekeeping" details—information about contracts, payroll, student records, time limits for grading, and so forth.

A knowledgeable and enthusiastic program staff creates confidence in instructors. It conveys the attitude that the program is well conceived and well run and that the directions given to an instructor can be relied upon. In this section, we will take a look at what program staff can share with course instructors, how the staff-to-instructor relationship can serve as a model for instructor-to-student relationships, and how peer group support can bolster instructor confidence and commitment. The appendix contains some examples of program information, suggestions for reading, and a sample of a course development contract.

How Program Staff Can Help

This guide does not provide an in-depth analysis of administering and staffing a distance education program, but it is important in working with course instructors that your staff has a sense of shared mission and the information necessary to answer questions. In the business of distance education, knowing how your program works, who your students are, how your program fits into its sponsoring institution (if there is one), what its history and goals are, and who is responsible for what are all examples of the power that information has to bind people together in a common enterprise. Instructors, particularly new ones, need to feel that the distance education

program staff knows and cares about the program—that the staff can answer their questions and solve their problems.

Every staff member, no matter what his or her particular job responsibility, needs to know the program's "bigger picture." It may be helpful to review with your staff the list of questions provided in the appendix to this chapter.

We can think of the relationship between your program staff and your instructors as a *model* for the relationship that we hope will develop between the instructor and the student—knowledgeable, committed, and caring.

Orientation Activities

Once recruited, an instructor should be assigned to a designated staff person who will act as his or her primary contact within your program. Depending upon the size of the program, the staff member may work with the instructor only until a course is completed and ready for student enrollments, or until one or the other leaves the program. In either case, the staff person should be reasonably familiar with all phases of the program and should be able to communicate information and expectations clearly. A courteous and positive manner is essential.

There is no single ideal model for instructor orientation. Each program will develop the procedures that seem most comfortable and efficient. However, the following outline suggests some elements that need to be included, whether the orientation is done in one relatively formal meeting or informally over several meetings with the instructor.

Elements of an Instructor Orientation

General information about distance education

- Definition
- Historical background
- National and international organizations in distance education

Information about the particular program

- History and mission
- Academic or vocational emphasis
- Institutional relationship (if any); nonprofit or proprietary
- Size, number of courses, general demographics of students
- General information about course formats; use of instructional technologies

Distance teaching

- Student expectations; anticipating and responding
- Stylistic considerations
- Format consistency
- Establishing interaction
- Timeliness

Working with the program

- Services offered to instructors
- Establishing a time frame for course development
- Paying for instructional expenses (e.g., telephone, postage, course media)
- Contracts, payrolls, recordkeeping
- Evaluation

Personal interaction is crucial to building a strong bond between the instructor and the program and should not be neglected. Not all of the information must be given in a face-to-face meeting, however. Some programs may use an instructor's handbook or manual, which can describe policies and procedures in more detail and give the instructor something for future reference. A manual also helps to ensure that all instructors are given the same information, regardless of which staff member provides the orientation.

Peer Support

A technique that is being used very successfully in some distance education programs is pairing a new instructor with one who has been working with the program for some length of time. A luncheon or even a coffee hour provides a pleasant setting for introducing an instructor to your program and to another instructor with whom to exchange information and ideas.

A variation of this is to conduct a group orientation for several instructors teaching in the same subject area such as mathematics or psychology. The group orientation requires some experience and skill to do well, because the orientation should maintain its interactive character and not become merely a lecture.

Contracts

The natural culmination of the orientation process is a contractual agreement between the program and the instructor for developing and/or teaching a distance education course. What specific wording needs to be included in the contract depends upon the individual program: distance education programs based in an academic institution will have legal requirements different from programs that are self-supporting and freestanding. The sample contract included in the appendix covers most topics that need a formal agreement, including development–teaching fee, completion date, copyright provisions, policies applying to subsequent course revisions, and teaching of the completed course. Your program may need only one contract to cover both course development and teaching, or you may need separate contracts for each phase of the process. The most important considerations in course development–teaching contracts, as in any contract, are that the language is clear and unambiguous and that the rights and responsibilities of each party are explicit and reasonable.

Summary

The orientation process is a bridge between recruitment of an instructor and active participation of the instructor in your distance education program. The information and activities provided during orientation have both a philosophical and a pragmatic focus, helping the instructor to understand the nature of distance education and its students and to learn the specific policies, procedures, and services of your particular program. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff members are your best resources for orientation activities; other instructors within the program can serve as peer support. Ideally, the relationship between the staff and the instructor, beginning with orientation, serves as the model for the subsequent relationship between the instructor and the students.

Appendix to "Orientation"

What Your Program Staff Needs to Know About the Program

Does your program have a mission or goals statement? Is your program part of a larger institution or organization? How do your program's goals fit into the larger framework (if applicable)?

Is your program self-supporting or does it receive funds from another institution or organization? Does it receive any public funding (federal, state, or local)?

Journals

Continuing Higher Education Review (formerly *Continuum*). Comes with membership in NUCEA.

American Journal of Distance Education. A newer journal under the direction of Michael Moore of Pennsylvania State University. Especially good for information about Independent Study Division institutions and programs.

Distance Education. From Australia and South Pacific External Studies Association. Many good articles on instructional development as well as administration of distance education programs.

Technology in Higher Education (THE). Although primarily directed at classroom instruction, it has much good information on new technologies, especially computers, videodisc, and the like.

For programs not based in an academic institution, the National Home Study Council provides many good publications dealing with administration and instruction in distance education programs.

Also take note of journals in higher education and publications dealing with various technologies.

OHIO UNIVERSITY—INDEPENDENT STUDY
MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

This agreement is made between (Hereinafter called the "Author") and the Independent Study Office, Ohio University, for the following described work:

APPROVAL The Author agrees to obtain written approval of the project from the department chairperson. *That approval is to be indicated by the department chairperson's signature at the bottom of this contract.*

AUTHOR'S FEE The Independent Study Office agrees to pay the Author the sum of in exchange for the above described work.

DELIVERY OF THE WORK The author agrees to deliver the completed work by the date of . A postponement of the date of delivery in excess of 30 days should have the express written approval of a representative of Independent Study.

COPYRIGHT The Author agrees that the copyright and all rights pertaining to the copyright for materials developed for an independent study course shall be held by Ohio University. As such, the Independent Study Office assumes the right and responsibility for editing, reproducing, revising, and adapting the materials for use in Independent Study.

Upon request, the Author shall be entitled to a royalty-free license for the purpose of incorporating all or a portion of the developed materials in some other work that the Author may create; provided, that a license may be denied if it is determined by Ohio University that the "other work" is so substantially like the developed materials that it constitutes merely a reprint or revision.

REVISIONS

The Author agrees to revise and update the above described work at the request of the Independent Study Office for a percentage of the above mentioned fee to be determined by the percentage of revision and by fees prevailing at the time of the revision.

The Author further agrees that if he/she cannot make the revision at the request of the Independent Study Office, the Independent Study Office will be free to make other arrangements.

Should the Author become disassociated from teaching the independent study course, the Independent Study Office retains the right to continue using these materials, revising or adapting them as the Independent Study Office and the new instructor deem appropriate.

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

The Author agrees to write the instructional materials in accordance with the guidelines printed in *A Manual for Developing the Independent Study Correspondence Course*.

The Author agrees to submit the outline, introduction, and first lesson to the Independent Study Office for review and approval by the Independent Study staff and subject matter consultant prior to writing the remainder of the course.

The Author agrees to meet with the production staff of the Independent Study Office at least twice during development of the course: the first meeting to take place after the review of the outline, introduction and first lesson; the second meeting to take place after the entire course has been written, reviewed by the Independent Study staff and the subject matter consultant, and edited, but prior to the final production of the study guide.

TEACHING

The Author agrees to assume the teaching load of this course via correspondence study. Should the Author decline to assume this

How many students are served by your program? Is it larger or smaller than two years ago? Why? Do you serve a particular group of students (age, subject area, specific organization or company)?

How many courses does your program offer? Are you gaining or losing in total courses? What courses are most in demand? What courses would your students like to have that your program doesn't currently offer?

If your program is based in an academic institution, do the courses in your program earn regular institutional credit? Can students earn an entire degree through your program? Do you have an external degree program? If so, how many students are active in it?

Knowing Your Faculty

Where were they educated? (A one-page resume of each person who writes courses or teaches in your program can be useful.)

What do your instructors do when not working with your program (areas of specialization in a subject, special research interests, notable interests outside of teaching)? Good sources of information are faculty–staff newsletters, departmental newsletters or annual reports, local news media, alumni publications, and student newspapers.

What teaching "styles" do your instructors have? Keep your ears open—talk to students if the instructor teaches in a classroom or other formal setting. Pay attention to media reports about unusual methods or resources the person uses in the classroom.

Encourage an attitude of professionalism among your staff. Support as much as possible the participation of staff members in distance education organizations, workshops, and conferences. Make professional journals and other print resources available and encourage your staff to read them. Make connections with other distance education programs and encourage your staff to do the same.

Resource Organizations for Distance Education Programs

The two principal organizations in the United States that encourage and assist in the development of high quality distance education programs are the Division of Independent Study of the National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA) and the National Home Study Council.

The Division of Independent Study is open to distance education programs and their individual staff members whose sponsoring institutions are members of NUCEA. The division focuses on academic distance education programs and promotes cooperation within and between institutions, relationships with external agencies such as the military services, high quality

instructional materials, and efficient and effective student services. The division offers many opportunities for professional development of distance education program staff.

The National Home Study Council serves a similar purpose for proprietary distance education organizations. It also sponsors a rigorous accreditation program for those organizations and offers many services to develop and maintain quality programs.

Participating in the organization appropriate to your program gives you and your staff a wealth of resources and opportunities and enhances your image as a credible operation.

Basic Books for Distance Education Program Staff

This is a selected bibliography of materials that your program should have or be able to obtain through interlibrary loan.

Books

Adults as Learners, by K. Patricia Cross. Jossey-Bass, 1981.

The Changing World of Correspondence Study, edited by Ossian MacKenzie and Edward Christensen. McGraw-Hill, 1971.

Correspondence Instruction in the United States, edited by Ossian MacKenzie, Edward Christensen, and Paul Rigby. McGraw-Hill, 1968.

Distance Education: A Survey and Bibliography, by Borje Holmberg. Nicholas Publishing Co., 1977. An excellent resource by one of Europe's noted researchers in distance education.

Learning at the Back Door, by Charles Wedemeyer. University of Wisconsin Press, 1981. One of the best recent works on nontraditional education.

New Directions for Continuing Education. An occasional series from Jossey-Bass, dealing with many aspects of continuing education. One of the good titles for distance education programs is *Teaching Adults Effectively*, No. 6, 1980.

Readings in Principles of Distance Education and *Readings in Distance Learning and Instruction*, edited by Michael Moore and Christopher Clark. American Center for Study of Distance Education, Pennsylvania State University, 1989. These two publications bring together much of the recent scholarship in distance education, most of which has not been published elsewhere.

load, Independent Study reserves the right to cancel this contract and payment. Should the Author be unable to teach the course due to departure from the University, he/she will assist the Independent Study Office in locating a new instructor for the course in order to be eligible for payment.

_____
(Author's Signature)

_____
(Soc. Sec. No.)

This agreement has been signed on _____
(Date)

Ohio University Independent Study Office

By: _____

Date: _____

Department Chairperson's Approval: I approve the above-named Author for the work indicated and for teaching this course via correspondence study.

_____
(Signature)

_____
(Date)

Chapter 3
Supporting the Course Development Process

Chapter 1
Recruitment

Chapter 2
Orientation

Chapter 3
Supporting the Course Development Process

Chapter 4
Supporting Teaching at a Distance

Chapter 5
Evaluation

Our job as course editors is to make your knowledge look as good as possible in print.

In this chapter we move from the preliminary stages of recruiting and orientation of instructors to the first of the two key elements of distance education: preparing instructional materials for students learning outside the classroom walls. (The second key element, tutorial instruction, will be the subject of the next chapter.) The essential question in course development is: How can we help the course instructor transfer his or her subject knowledge and personality into a form useful to the student? We will look at ways to help this happen, including the role of course development staff, using course author manuals and some of the topics covered in them, and working with outside resources such as media specialists, review personnel or committees, and credentialing agencies.

Although course materials for distance education range from very simple photocopied notes to packages that integrate the most advanced electronic technologies, this guide will focus primarily on print materials. Every distance education program uses some form of printed instructional materials, and print materials are the most accessible to students in all places and circumstances.

The Role of Course Development Staff

In addition to the program administrator, the two most important groups of staff for a distance education program are a course development staff and a student services staff. The first group makes it possible to offer courses; the second group makes it possible to have students in the program. It is also important for instructors to know and interact with both groups.

In recent years, increasing professionalism in course design and editing is affecting the number and level of course development services offered by distance education programs. Awards for excellence in course design are given annually by the Independent Study Division of NUCEA (for college-based programs), similar recognition is given by the National Home Study Council (for proprietary programs), and there is an understanding that distance education materials must increasingly compete with commercially produced print and nonprint materials. These trends have promoted a sense

of "production values"—course materials should look like more than a loose aggregation of unrelated parts. As more attention has been paid to course development, the staff members responsible for that development have become more experienced and better trained, and they are developing networks for sharing their ideas and expertise.

From a strongly linear, mass-production model of course design—"take subject A, arrange it in order B, and it will yield course materials C"—course development is becoming a true partnership between professionals. This collaborative model between the course author and the editor–designer considers what is known about the students learning at a distance, what knowledge and skills the course is expected to impart, and the mix of print and nonprint materials that might best facilitate that learning.

In practice, the services offered by your course development staff will vary with the size and scope of your program and the funds available. Some programs can offer instructors a full range of editorial services from initial design through copy editing and proofreading, illustration and graphic services, and typesetting and printing. Others may be limited to printing and distributing the materials. Editorial services in most programs cover a wide range of functions that may include the following:

- ***Course development***: Close contact with an instructor to decide upon the format of a course; for example, the number of lessons, number and type of examinations, form of submitted assignments, use of graphic elements, use of materials reprinted from other sources, choosing textbooks.
- ***Copy editing***: Editing for format consistency, clarity of language, grammatical form; obtaining reprint permissions; adding standard instructions common to all courses in a program; integrating nonprint elements; preparing manuscripts for typing or wordprocessing.
- ***Wordprocessing or desktop publishing***: Although not strictly an "editorial" function, use of computers to prepare courses has blurred the distinction between functions traditionally thought of as belonging to editors and those of typists–wordprocessors.
- ***Proofreading and preparation for printing***: Initial proofreading of prepared materials, consulting with course authors for corrections and changes, checking format and pagination, providing directions for printer.
- ***Maintaining course materials***: Archiving, maintaining files for camera-ready copy, tracking textbook revisions, responding to student or instructor problems with instructional materials.

There are two points at which course development assistance is most important: the first is at the beginning of the designing–writing process, and the second is at the point where the materials are ready to be printed in final form. Before a course is written, clearly explain to the author the general structure and form of the instructional materials you use, as well as any limitations your students may have. Doing so will help prevent misunderstandings and problems such as assigning a research paper to students who lack access to a large academic library.

Toward the end of course development, even the smallest distance education program needs to have someone who is responsible for that final close reading of course materials before they are printed and distributed to students. Most program staff members have found that the ability of authors to proofread final drafts is highly variable. Some authors are accustomed to reading galleys for article or book publication; for others, the process is completely new or they are simply not very skilled at proofreading their own work. Spelling checkers, which are part of most high-level wordprocessing programs, are very helpful, but they are not a substitute for careful, word-by-word reading.

There is no standard for measuring how many people are required for the course development function in a distance education program. Most programs balance the number of students, the number of courses, the skills and experience of the course authors, other needs for editorial assistance (catalogs, brochures, forms) and the restrictions on program resources to arrive at a reasonable number.

One of the major resources that course editors–designers use to help authors are course authors' manuals. These may be thought of as "roadmaps" to the actual procedures of writing a distance education course, although they are not a substitute for the ongoing working relationship between the author and the editor–designer. One of the advantages of manuals is that authors can have a ready reference whenever and wherever they are writing. In the next section, we will consider what might be contained in such a manual.

Course Authors' Manuals

Manuals written to assist course authors existed as early as the mid-1940s and perhaps earlier, but they came into common use in the 1960s and 1970s as the field of distance education began a concerted effort to change the image of the "matchbook correspondence school." Part of the image change was to change course materials from the "read this, write that" format to

something more truly approximating the course instructor's input as he or she would teach in the classroom.

Manuals vary in format from the "stylesheet" with brief outlines and checklists to the book-sized *Home Study Course Development Handbook* (The National Home Study Council). For a good example that falls somewhere between the extremes, see *Preparing an Effective Self-Study Course* (Morris Sammons and Charles Kozoll) in this guide series.

Regardless of overall style and detail, course authors' manuals need to have some common elements:

- ***Description of the course development process***: This can be a reinforcement of oral information given to an instructor as part of the orientation or an initial development meeting, perhaps with additional philosophical background or rationale from research or practice. A flow chart or other graphic presentation that identifies the elements of the process and their relationship to one another can be helpful.
- ***Timelines***: Timelines or schedules need not be hard-and-fast, but it is helpful to the instructor to know who does what when. Timelines also help to keep the course development on track and help to describe the normal range of time for certain elements to occur. For example, if an instructor wants to incorporate reprinted material from another source as part of an instructional unit, it is helpful to know that getting reprint permission from *x* source takes approximately *y* weeks.
- ***Formats of instructional materials***: Descriptions and, better yet, examples of the actual parts of course materials are the most helpful parts of any course authors' manual. Whether your program calls these materials a "study guide," a "syllabus," or something else, course writers need to know what the parts are and how they are arranged. Examples from the best materials in your program help to clarify your expectations and give writers concrete models to emulate.
- ***Miscellaneous helps***: These include information about mechanics: for example, in what form to submit a manuscript (double-spaced, typewritten, what size computer disk, what software), what information is needed for a reprint request, what kind of graphic elements may be included, and so on.

A course authors' manual may be generic, but in most cases you will want to produce one tailored to your specific requirements. The appendix to this chapter contains a short list of manuals from several distance education programs. A good place to begin when developing a course authors' manual

is to look at several of these, then adapt the information and format to your own needs.

Working With outside Resources

Up to this point we have been concentrating on the resources needed for course authors to produce the primary print materials for their courses. However, it is more and more common for courses to be supplemented with various kinds of nonprint media—audiotapes, slides, videotapes, computer programs, and audio or video broadcasts. In large distance education programs, staff may be available to help instructors develop nonprint components for a course, but the more usual situation is that those components are developed with the help of outside agencies.

In an institution-based program, the necessary resources may be available elsewhere in the institution. For example, a graphics production unit may be able to produce slides or specialized drawings or prepare photographs for printing in study materials; a telecommunications or video production unit may be able to produce audiotapes or videotapes for either broadcast or nonbroadcast use or set up teleconferencing opportunities. In freestanding programs, these services may be obtained on a contractual basis. In such cases, it is advisable for the program to act as the contracting agent and as the liaison between the course author and the outside agency.

Some course authors are knowledgeable about various forms of nonprint media and are comfortable in creating outlines, scripts, and the like. More commonly, however, the author will depend upon program staff to work with media specialists. If your program is using nonprint media on even a relatively limited basis, at least one person on your staff needs to have some background in media development. This need not involve formal training—workshops or short courses that cover the basic terminology and concepts may be enough to allow your staff person to communicate intelligently with media specialists. In some cases, for example where an instructor will be part of a team creating a multimedia course, you may also want to offer that instructor an opportunity to participate in some sort of training.

Course Review

Another aspect of course development in which your program staff may be involved is the review or approval processes. This is most common in programs based in an academic institution, although programs having certain types of specialized courses may need to deal with credentialing organizations. Courses developed for your program may be subject to review by the appropriate academic department if they are offered for

academic credit. In some institutions, courses may also be reviewed by an institutionwide curriculum review committee.

The best preparation for course review, whether by an academic unit or a credentialing agency, is preparation before the fact. In other words, instructors and course development staff need to find out what the review criteria are *at the initial stage of course development*. If printed guidelines or a checklist for course review exists, obtain copies for both the instructor and the course editor–designer so that the criteria can be built in to the course from the very beginning. If a course is a first-time effort in either content or structure, it may be helpful to have a representative of the review committee or agency act as a consultant at key points in the development process.

Summary

In this chapter on the course development process, we have looked at what kinds of support are needed by course writers and discussed how and by whom such support can be provided by distance education programs. Both the Independent Study Division of NUCEA and the National Home Study Council provide ongoing opportunities for in-service training of course development staff, as well as extensive resource materials to help in the process. The appendix for this chapter contains a brief list of course authors' manuals, a sample diagram for the course development process, two samples of course formats, and course evaluation guidelines.

Appendix to "Course Development"

The following is a selected list of course authors' manuals, which can be requested from the respective programs. This list represents only a sample of those available.

Brigham Young University, Department of Home Study. *Home Study Writer's Guide*.

Indiana University, Independent Study Division. *Writing and Teaching for Independent Study*.

University of Missouri, Center for Independent Study. *Independent Study Writer's Manual*.

University of North Carolina, Independent Study by Extension. *Author's Guide*.

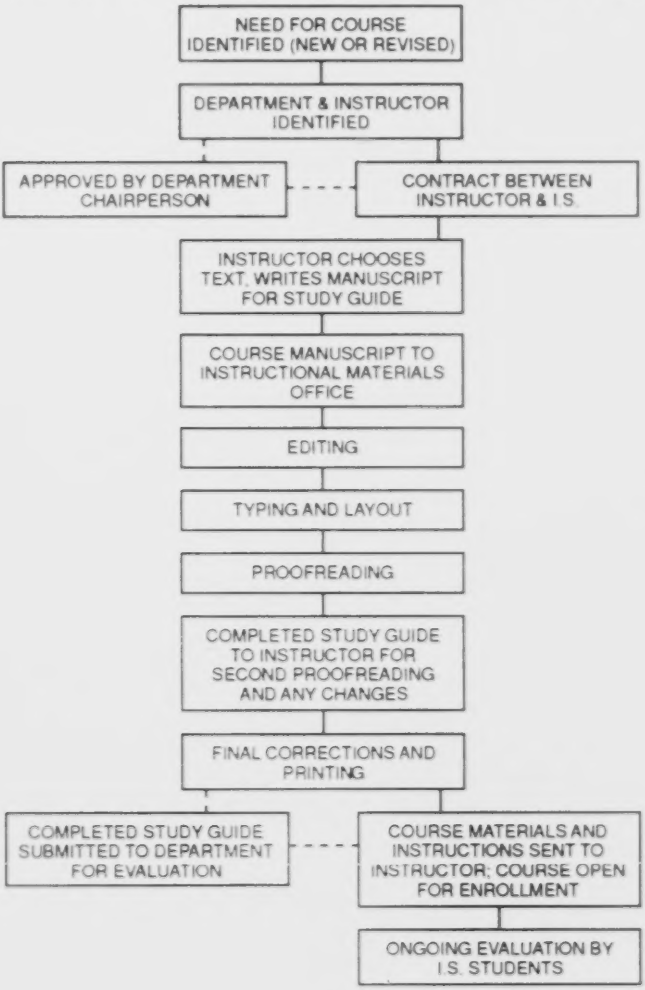
Ohio University, Independent Study Program. *Developing and Teaching the Independent Study Course*.

University of Wisconsin–Extension, Independent Study. *Teaching and Writing Independent Study Courses.*

National Home Study Council. *Home Study Course Development Handbook.*

University of Illinois, The Guide Series. *Preparing an Effective Self-Study Course.*

Developing the Independent Study Course at Ohio University


NEED FOR COURSE IDENTIFIED (NEW OR REVISED)
DEPARTMENT & INSTRUCTOR IDENTIFIED
APPROVED BY DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON
CONTRACT BETWEEN INSTRUCTOR & I.S.
INSTRUCTOR CHOOSES TEXT, WRITES MANUSCRIPT FOR STUDY GUIDE
COURSE MANUSCRIPT TO INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS OFFICE
EDITING
TYPING AND LAYOUT
PROOFREADING
COMPLETED STUDY GUIDE TO INSTRUCTOR FOR SECOND PROOFREADING AND ANY CHANGES
FINAL CORRECTIONS AND PRINTING
COMPLETED STUDY GUIDE SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT FOR EVALUATION
COURSE MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS SENT TO INSTRUCTOR; COURSE OPEN FOR ENROLLMENT
ONGOING EVALUATION BY I.S. STUDENTS

Examples of Course Formats

I. Examples of Course Using Print Materials Only

Course Introduction

- Introductory statement
- Prerequisites
- Brief biographical sketch of course author
- Statement of course goals or objectives
- Textbooks and required supplies
- Statement of grading standards
- Description of examinations
- Information about course paper or project (optional)
- Special instructions

Lessons

- Reading assignment
- Lesson objectives
- Discussion or author's notes
- Self-study assignment
- Writing assignment for submission

II. Example of Course Using Print and Non-print Materials

Course Introduction—will be the same as above with additional section for instructions on obtaining and using non-print materials

Lessons

- Reading assignment
- Media assignment (listening or viewing)
- Lesson objectives
- Discussion or author's notes
- Self-study assignment
- Assignment for submission (may cover both print and non-print materials)

The Independent Study Division Course Evaluation Guidelines

The form that appears below is used by the Course Awards Committee of the Independent Study Division to judge and compare courses submitted each year by member programs. Over the years, these criteria have been refined and adapted to new technologies and new understanding of teaching and learning at a distance. In many member programs, the criteria have served as a model of course design.

COURSE RATING SHEET
INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSE AWARDS

LEVEL: University High School Noncredit

Course _____ School _____ Rating _____

	0	1	2	3	4	5
I. Course Preface						
1. Introduction, Overview, and General Objectives of Course						
2. Course Mechanics, Structure, Special Instructions, and Performance Standards						
II. Lessons						
1. Stated Instructional Objectives						
2. Supplemental Commentary, Discussion, and Help, Including Possible Audio and Video Components (Weighted twice other criteria; award 0–10 points.)						
3. Submitted Assignments and Assessment (Weighted twice other criteria; award 0–10 points.)						
4. Self-Help Exercises						
III. Communications Variants						
1. Writing Style						
2. Writing Mechanics and Editorial Consistency						
3. Page Organization, Layout, Cover, Additional Graphics						
IV. General Quality						

Chapter 4
Supporting Teaching at a Distance

Chapter 1
Recruitment

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Evaluation

He made me feel that he does care about me as a student even though it is in an independent study course. Comments were explicit and answered the questions I had. The instructor pinpointed my problems very well.

Working with distance education faculty does not end with the production of course materials. The second critical half of the whole is the tutorial relationship between the course instructor and the student—the element that distinguishes distance education from purely self-directed learning. Helping instructors achieve and sustain a dialogue with students can often mean the difference between a successful, growing program with satisfied students and a program plagued by dwindling enrollments, confused or angry students, and unhappy instructors.

In this chapter we will focus on two ways to foster good teaching at a distance: (1) expressing clear expectations and (2) solving problems.

Expressing Clear Expectations

As you have seen throughout this guide, clear and honest communication among all staff members connected with your program and those who write and teach the courses is essential to a program's success. The relationship between your staff and the instructors can serve as a model for the instructors' relationships with students. Just as instructors will have expectations of their students, so too you need to let instructors know specifically what activities are expected of them, the level of performance required, and the support services available to them.

In a distance education program where the writer of a course is also the instructor, the transition is somewhat easier and may need less definition and assistance from program staff than one in which instructors must become familiar with course materials before they can begin teaching. In either case, however, some needs are the same:

- ***Copies of the course materials***: These should be given to the instructor in the same form as those used by the students. Copies of all examinations should be included, as well as any additional informational materials (policies and procedures, for example) sent to students. Copies of the textbook(s) should also be given to instructors if they were not the course authors.

- ***Program policies and procedures***: These should be in written form and contain such information as how lessons are received and returned, expectations of turnaround time from student to instructor and back again, the kind of written response expected on students' assignments, who (program or instructor) is responsible for responding to student requests and complaints, how examinations are administered and monitored, and arrangements of payment for grading.
- ***Key resource people***: The instructor should be introduced to the person(s) in the program who can help with uncommon problems such as suspected plagiarism or cheating, students with special needs, or illness or incapacity of the instructor. In some programs, instructors are given a staff directory with office addresses and telephone numbers *and* a brief description of each person's responsibilities.

In programs where those who write courses also teach them, this information can be placed in one section of the course authors' manual, thus putting all the information in one package. Where the two functions are distinct, it may be preferable to create separate manuals for writers and instructors.

In programs where course writing and teaching are separate, it is important for the program to facilitate communication between writers and instructors. A combination social and business meeting, such as a luncheon, is a pleasant way for a writer and an instructor to share their perspectives on the course and to establish communication which will ultimately benefit their students. If such a meeting is not possible, your program can arrange a communication link (letter, computer, telephone) between them and encourage its use. Again, as in the recruitment process, pairing new instructors with more experienced ones, even if the courses they teach are not the same, can help build confidence and commitment.

Even experienced, enthusiastic, and committed instructors, however, can encounter problems while working with your program. Helping to resolve these problems can reduce your instructor turnover and enhance a positive image for the program.

Solving Problems

Program staff members cannot solve some instructor problems such as family or professional responsibilities that do not leave adequate time for distance teaching or loss of interest in the course or program. But some common problems you may encounter *can* be addressed by your program.

Overload

In many programs based in academic institutions, distance education faculty are regular faculty of the institution who teach your courses on an overload basis. In general, the students taking the course through your program are not counted in determining a "normal" teaching load in residence. Many programs have a handful of courses that generate tens or even hundreds of enrollments in a year, creating the equivalent of two or three extra classes for that instructor to teach.

One possible solution is to use technology to help—the assignments in a particular course may lend themselves to computer-generated responses. In this case (oversimplified for this example), the instructor prepares a set of responses for all possible answers in an assignment, and these are programmed into a computer, which can then identify a student's answers and print out the corresponding response. As in entirely hand-graded assignments, the instructor may still write responses or notes on individual lesson assignments. Obviously, this solution is possible only for assignments that produce a limited and predictable set of objective-type answers.

In lesson assignments that are essay in nature, technology may not be the solution. Using graduate student assistants or perhaps outside graders working on contract to assist the instructor with lesson assignments is another alternative. This may be somewhat simplified if the writer of the course does not teach it, therefore allowing the academic department or perhaps the program itself to hire as many instructors as necessary for the enrollments.

Another alternative is to have the course author and an instructional designer sit down and examine the course assignments to see if there are ways to shorten or simplify the assignments to reduce the time involved in grading. This is perhaps the least desirable alternative, because extra care must be taken not to destroy the instructional value of the assignments in the name of time-saving. In some cases, however, such a review may actually produce a stronger course.

Slow Grading

Here again, a preventative strategy is more effective than trying to remedy a bad situation. Establishing turnaround times that are realistic for the instructors in your program must take into account that the majority of our students and instructors still have to depend upon the postal service to move lessons back and forth. You also need to consider what other activities claim the time of your faculty. In an academically based program, instructors are likely to be faculty members who also teach in the classroom. In

freestanding programs, faculty members may be professionals with responsibilities in addition to teaching in your program.

If you are just beginning to establish a time standard for grading assignments, you may have to find the most workable time by trial and error. Determine the average time to mail assignments back and forth, then add whatever number of days seems reasonable for instructors to grade and comment on the assignments. If instructors consistently miss the deadlines, consider extending them, but research does tell us that student persistence and satisfaction are improved with shorter turnaround times. Some programs use a reward or penalty system to encourage instructors to meet turnaround standards; instructors may be given a bonus for grading assignments in less than the allotted time, or the stipend may be reduced by a certain percentage for every day over the allotted time.

Because slow grading may be a symptom of instructor overload, similar remedies can be tried, especially providing more than one instructor or assistant graders for courses with large numbers of students. If slow grading seems to be more a symptom of lack of interest or commitment to distance teaching and cannot be remedied with a reward or penalty system, then a tactful interview between the program director and the instructor is probably the best solution.

Responding to students

In addition to slow turnaround of assignments, the most common complaint of distant students is that instructors do not comment on their assignments or respond to their questions. If the *tutorial* nature of distance teaching is stressed from the first contacts between a course instructor and any program staff member, then the likelihood that instructors will encourage a dialogue with their students is greatly increased.

Information provided by your program can promote the dialogue by clearly delineating to both students and instructors the kinds of questions and comments to which instructors are expected to respond. For example, instructors should not be expected to deal with procedural matters such as fees, withdrawals, course transfers, transcripts, and records. In programs where students can use channels other than correspondence to communicate with instructors, for example, telephone or computer, clear guidelines should specify when and how the channels may be used. Instructors working at home should be encouraged to set specific times when they are available, and these times should be respected by both program staff and students.

Instructors, especially those who are new to distance teaching, often wonder how to create and maintain the expected dialogue with their students. "One to One," included in the appendix to this chapter, gives some

suggestions about using comments on lesson assignments to enhance the student–instructor dialogue.

Summary

In this chapter we have considered the second key element of a distance education program, distance teaching, and the ways in which programs can support and encourage instructors in their tutorial dialogue with students. We have also considered some potential problems in distance teaching and how these can be prevented or minimized. The appendix contains a sample of information provided to instructors and some suggestions for establishing a good instructor–student dialogue.

Appendix to "Supporting Teaching at a Distance"

The following information is provided to instructors teaching Independent Study (IS) courses in Ohio University's program. It is included here to show the kinds of information—both procedural and philosophical—that can give support to instructors.

Teaching Your Independent Study Course

After the course study guide is completed and the course is opened for enrollments, you will begin to receive lessons from students. The Independent Study office acts as a liaison between you and the student. Students send completed lesson assignments to the IS office, where they are logged and then forwarded to you. If you are teaching or have an office on the Athens campus, lessons will be sent to you through campus mail. When you have evaluated and graded the lessons, you will return them to the IS office. (A "grade" is not necessarily a letter grade—it can be a numerical score or "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" or "incomplete," etc., but each lesson assignment must have some sort of indication that you have evaluated it.) Then the grades will be recorded on our student record system and the lessons will be returned to the students.

If you teach or have an office off-campus, lessons will be sent by first class mail. When the first lessons are sent to you, you will also receive instructions for returning them to the IS office.

Lesson Cover Form

One of these forms [included in packet], completed by the student, will be attached to every lesson sent to you. You will be responsible only for completing the block in the lower right corner which asks for the grade, your signature, and the date. After you have entered this information, you may detach the **third** copy, marked

"Faculty," to keep for verification of payroll information. Return the remaining copies along with the lesson.

Student Biographical Form

The student is instructed to complete the front side of this form and submit it with the **first** lesson assignment. The form has been designed to give you some helpful background information about each of your students. (Of course, you may request other information from your students individually in addition to what is provided by the form.) On the **back** of this form you can keep a record of the lessons submitted and the grades you have assigned.

Payroll and Check Dates

The Independent Study office can supply you with a schedule of dates when the payroll is prepared and when checks are issued. If your regular University paycheck is direct-deposited, your IS course development and/or grading stipends will be also. Please be aware that standard deductions are taken from the check you receive for developing the Independent Study course, and from your periodic grading stipends.

If you have questions about your grading stipends or about students' assignments, please contact the Independent Study Office Manager.

Timeliness

A great factor in student completion rates in correspondence study courses is the amount of time (we call it "turnaround time") which elapses between the time a student submits a completed assignment and when he or she receives it with evaluation and comments. Under normal circumstances, you are allowed **two weeks** from the time you receive a lesson to grade it and return it to the IS office. Although we do not hold you to that time period during times when the University is closed, we do request that you notify us when you expect to be away for more than one week. It is also a courtesy to notify your students—a brief note on one of their assignments is sufficient.

You will receive a lesson delinquency notice from the IS office whenever you have lessons in your possession for more than two weeks unless you have made prior arrangements.

Note

Course authors and instructors *are not permitted* to handle administrative functions related to Independent Study courses, such as course transfers and fee refunds. If a student requests you to do so, please refer the request to the Office Manager of Independent Study.

One to One: Enhancing your Relationship with the Correspondence Student through Lesson Comments

(by John A. Robinson)

Correspondence study allows for a unique tutorial relationship between you and the student. Because of the isolation of the distant learner, the nature of your comments on and responses to individual lesson assignments can be the deciding factor in the student's motivation and success. The following guidelines for lesson evaluation have been compiled to help you use your comments for maximum benefit to the student.

1. BE PERSONAL	Students need to know they are dealing with a flesh-and-blood human being. Remember that the correspondence student does not have the opportunity for classroom discussion. By using a conversational style in your comments, you can help dispel students' notions that they are dealing with an impersonal institution.
2. BE SPECIFIC	Comments such as "good job" and "needs work" don't really tell students anything. Most students **thirst** to know both what they have done well and where they need to improve. Comment **specifically** on aspects of the lesson which fulfill or fail to fulfill your expectations.
3. BE PATIENT	A classroom student learns in a few days the nature of work the instructor expects. The correspondence student learns in a few lessons. If it doesn't compromise your standards, you might consider using stricter criteria to evaluate the later lessons of the course. You can **expect** students to know your requirements by the end of the course.
4. BE INSPIRATIONAL	A well-placed word from you can spur the student to greater achievement. Nothing can help dispel "the loneliness of the long distance learner" more than a motivational word from you. And there's nothing better than a little humor.
5. BE PROMPT	Research indicates that prompt evaluation and return of student lessons significantly increases the completion rate of correspondence courses. Turnaround time for submitted lessons is a crucial factor in encouraging or discouraging your students' efforts.

Chapter 5
Evaluation

Chapter 1
Recruitment

Chapter 2
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Chapter 5
Evaluation

The course was very good. It made me think in order to grasp what was being taught, and due to that work I feel I will retain that knowledge.

In this final chapter we will consider how evaluation can support the faculty in a distance education program, and we will look at some specific examples of using evaluation to solve problems and reward excellence.

Evaluating Courses

In most face-to-face teaching situations, students are given an opportunity to evaluate their learning situation and their instructors. The same ought to apply to distance education courses. A well-constructed evaluation form can be immeasurably helpful not only to the course instructor, but also to the distance education program. The course evaluation provides students with their best opportunity to comment on the course materials and the policies and procedures of the program, as well as to evaluate the instructor. It is a truism in distance education programs that you will hear from students who are either very satisfied with their experience or very dissatisfied—and this applies to course evaluations. It is also true that having course evaluations in a program is helpful only if they are *used* by the program staff and the course authors/instructors to refine and improve all aspects of the program.

Developing Course Evaluations

Many models for evaluation forms exist. Nearly all creditable programs use them, and using written evaluations is part of both the *Standards* of the Division of Independent Study of the National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA) and the accrediting standards of the National Home Study Council for freestanding programs. If you are developing or revising an evaluation form, either organization can provide you with suggestions. If your program is based in an academic institution, you may want to adapt the evaluation form used in classroom courses. If your program develops courses connected with a credentialing agency or association, that agency may suggest or require certain elements on the evaluation form. The appendix to this chapter contains some examples of course evaluation forms you can adapt to your own needs.

Using Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are particularly useful for pinpointing problems with the program, the materials, or the instructor. In some programs, only the instructor sees the evaluation forms. In other programs, however, a course designer or editor also sees them, and this can alert the program staff to editorial or mechanical problems with course materials, including pages missing or incorrectly bound, textual errors that have escaped the proofreader, or problems with procedural instructions. Course evaluations are also your best "early warning system" of an instructor who is not communicating well with students. Not every student will get along with every instructor, but a persistent pattern of complaints signals a need for intervention.

Course evaluations also serve a second important function in identifying elements to be examined in updating or revising the course materials. If students usually comment that a particular element is difficult or unclear, this should alert the course production staff and the course writer that some change needs to be made in later versions of the materials. Another problem that can be identified by course evaluations is examinations that do not correspond well with the content presented in the study materials. Encourage your course instructors to read their evaluations carefully and to alert your staff to potential problems—especially if your course authors are not the course instructors.

If your program staff develops and uses evaluations as a positive tool to help strengthen all elements of the program—administration, course materials, and teaching—then instructors are more likely to see them as a useful way to develop good distance teaching skills, rather than as trivialities to be ignored or as judgments to be feared.

Evaluating Faculty Members

If your program staff has done a good job of recruiting faculty members and introducing them to your philosophy, procedures, and students, you are most likely to find evaluating them a relatively easy and pleasant task. In the great majority of distance education programs, both institutionally based and freestanding, course authors and instructors join the program voluntarily, and most are motivated by the challenge of working with students in nontraditional ways. Although many faculty members will be new to the process of distance teaching, many of them will have skills and insights valuable to your program. So, evaluation should involve listening on your part as well.

In some programs, a formal review of faculty members is required by an institution or a credentialing agency. As emphasized so often in this guide,

expectations stated clearly ahead of time make life easier for both your program staff and your faculty. If your faculty will be formally evaluated by someone outside your program, the criteria should be known and discussed with your faculty members as part of their recruitment and orientation to your program. It is also important for your staff to demonstrate support and advocacy for your faculty. If these people are valuable to you and to your students, any review or evaluation should reflect this support.

If no formal review or evaluation of your faculty members is expected, you may still wish to give them a periodic opportunity to review their performance. For example, develop an "Instructor's Course and Program Evaluation" and have faculty members complete it, then give them an opportunity to discuss it along with students' course evaluations. Most distance education courses have a predictable cycle of updating or revision, usually in response to new editions of textbooks. These update points are also good points for a general review of the course with the course author and instructor.

Instructor Problems

The voluntary nature of participation in distance teaching usually means that, like your students, your faculty will not stay with your program if they are not suited to or not satisfied with the experience. If approached in a nonjudgmental way, an instructor who has lost interest in teaching for your program may willingly assist you in finding another instructor for the course. Occasionally, however, you will have to deal with a problem faculty member. Persistently disregarding program policies and procedures and failing to communicate with students are the most common situations that call for some intervention. There is no one "right" way to approach the situation. Your specific response to a problem will depend on the nature of your program, how long the faculty member has worked with it, how many students are affected, and so forth. However, you should act promptly when a problem becomes apparent—you and your staff are ultimately answerable to your students for the quality of the courses you offer.

Often, an honest but nonconfrontational conversation with the faculty member can solve problems relating to policies and procedures. Perhaps the policies were not clearly explained the first time, or the instructor may be trying to assist his or her students, not realizing the effect of disregarding the "standard operating procedures." Ignoring the responsibility to communicate with students is a more serious problem and perhaps more difficult to solve, because it may involve the faculty member's "turf rights" to teach as he or she thinks best. A contractual agreement (discussed earlier in this guide) that covers the respective responsibilities of the program staff and the

faculty member, may give you some leverage if dialogue and persuasion are not sufficient to improve the situation. As a last resort, you can seek another instructor or close the course, but if your program is part of a larger institution or organization, you may have to defend your actions to a third party—or you may not have the authority to make the ultimate decision about the instructor or the course.

Rewarding Excellence

Although you may worry about problem instructors, in actual practice you will probably more often look for ways to reward your faculty. Recognition and reward can come from within your program, from the institution or organization of which you are a part, or from an outside organization. You can recognize and reward good course materials, good teaching (or both), or extraordinary service or dedication to distance education. Although many faculty members in distance education programs are initially attracted by the prospect of additional income, most stay because of the challenges and satisfactions of working with students who would otherwise be excluded from those educational opportunities. Thus there are strong intrinsic rewards, but since we all like to be appreciated, public recognition should be an integral part of your program.

In academically based programs, writing and teaching for your program may be part of normal faculty activities—counted in teaching load and tenure and promotion decisions. In that case, you will probably be asked to document the faculty members' contributions, and that documentation will become part of the instructors' records. In the majority of programs, however, distance education activities are considered peripheral and overload. More effort will be required from you and your staff to publicize the contributions of your faculty. The following are just a few examples of ways to do this:

- Sponsor an annual or biennial reception for all distance education faculty members, with special invitations to college deans and academic department heads.
- Identify faculty members who have made exceptional contributions and recognize them with certificates in a public presentation.
- Write features about your program's courses and faculty for publication in your institution's faculty newsletter, alumni magazine, continuing education newsletter, or other publication that is routinely read by administrators, other faculty members, alumni, or influential friends of the institution.

- Write a letter to the department chairperson commending a particular faculty member's contributions to your program.
- If your program publishes a separate catalog or course list, include the names of your faculty.

If your program is freestanding, recognition of your faculty should be part of your overall public relations activities. A few suggestions to try:

- Spotlight various courses and faculty members in your catalog or program brochure.
- Feature faculty members and their courses in your newsletter, slide program, videotape, or other promotional materials.
- Write feature articles about your courses and faculty for news media in the communities where your faculty members live.
- If your faculty members do not all work in one centralized office, sponsor a reception or a faculty weekend and include some recognition activities.
- Sponsor a "student choice" contest, and ask students to vote for their favorite instructors, then award certificates to the winners.

Two national organizations that sponsor recognition activities for distance education faculty and courses are the National University Continuing Education Association and the National Home Study Council. The Independent Study Division of NUCEA sponsors an annual awards competition for distance education courses. (Your institution needs to be a member of NUCEA for your program to participate.) Courses that win awards also earn recognition for the course author, the program, and the institution. The National Home Study Council's voluntary, but rigorous, accreditation process evaluates course materials and the qualifications of instructors, and its accreditation is a justifiable source of pride for a program so awarded. Because these are national organizations, affiliation with the one appropriate to your program provides a wider scope for recognition of your faculty.

Summary

In this chapter we have looked at some philosophical and practical aspects of evaluation and recognition of faculty members in distance education programs, including uses of course evaluations, faculty evaluation, problem faculty members, and suggestions for recognition and rewards. Some examples of course evaluation forms are included in the appendix to this chapter.

Conclusion

This guide has touched on some of the major issues to consider in working with course authors and instructors in distance education programs. If you have questions or situations that were not discussed here, this is a good point to get to know some of your fellow distance education professionals or to become familiar with the journals, conferences, monographs, and other excellent resources that cover the field of distance education. Remember that your goal is to create a partnership with your course faculty that will further the aspirations of your students at a distance.

Appendix to "Evaluation"

The following are some examples of course evaluation forms. They are intended to show some of the different types of questions which can be used on such a form. Some programs use rating scales that allow the information to be coded and analyzed (see the University of Florida example of the form and the consumer information derived from it). The course development staff at Brigham Young University's Independent Study program uses items 19 and 20 on its evaluation form to help authors pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in individual lessons in their courses. The evaluation form used by Ohio State University asks students to evaluate the textbook(s), as well as the study guide. The information may affirm a course author's choice of textbook or it may suggest reasons to change the textbook.

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
INDEPENDENT STUDY BY CORRESPONDENCE
COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

INSTRUCTOR _____ COURSE _____ DATE _____

Please tell us what you think about the course you have just finished so we will know how to improve it for other students. Your grade will not be affected by these ratings. Thank you for your help.

For each item fill in the circle containing the symbol which best expresses your opinion.
SA = strongly agree, A = agree, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree, NA = does not apply.

	SA	A	D	SD	NA
COURSE PLANNING					
1. I understand the objectives of the course.	○	○	○	○	○
2. The course is well organized.	○	○	○	○	○
3. The course held my interest until I finished it.	○	○	○	○	○
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS					
4. The study guide helped me achieve the course objectives.	○	○	○	○	○
5. The study guide is written clearly.	○	○	○	○	○
6. The textbooks and study guide are up to date.	○	○	○	○	○
7. The time required to complete a lesson is reasonable.	○	○	○	○	○
8. What was the average number of hours required to complete a lesson? Mark one. ①(1–2) ②(3–5) ③(6–9) ④(10 or more)	①	②	③	④	
9. After reading the assignments, I knew what to do.	○	○	○	○	○
10. The assignments were of definite instructional value.	○	○	○	○	○
TEACHING AND EXAMINATIONS					
11. My instructor made helpful comments on my assignments.	○	○	○	○	○
12. My instructor motivated me to do my best work.	○	○	○	○	○
13. My lessons were graded promptly.	○	○	○	○	○
14. The examinations tested the most important aspects of the course.	○	○	○	○	○
15. I understood the standards for determining my course grade.	○	○	○	○	○
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES					
16. My texts and study guide were sent promptly after registration. (NA = mail not used)	○	○	○	○	○
17. My texts and study guide were received in good condition. (NA = mail not used)	○	○	○	○	○
18. The Independent Study employees I encountered were courteous.	○	○	○	○	○
19. I received efficient administrative service in response to my calls or letters.	○	○	○	○	○
ENROLLMENT INFORMATION					
20. This course was accurately described in the information I saw before registering.	○	○	○	○	○
21. I would recommend independent study to my friends.	○	○	○	○	○

NOTE: USE A NUMBER 2 OR SOFTER LEAD PENCIL. MAKE ALL MARKS IN THE RESPONSE CIRCLES. THEY SHOULD BE DARK AND GLOSSY. DO NOT MAKE ANY STRAY MARKS. ERASE COMPLETELY IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

PLEASE CONTINUE ON REVERSE SIDE

DO NOT MARK IN THIS AREA

GENERAL COMMENTS

22. What did you like most about this course?

23. What did you like least about this course?

PLEASE GIVE THIS FORM TO YOUR EXAMINATION SUPERVISOR TO RETURN.

CONSUMER INFORMATION

Independent Study Course and Instructor Evaluation Results

How did we do? In end-of-course surveys of 2,808 students in Florida's program of independent study, an overwhelming number were satisfied with their courses and the services they received in enrolling in and completing those courses.

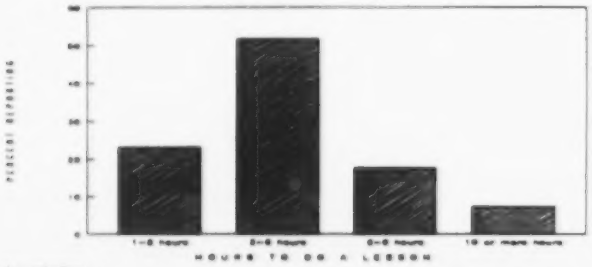
Course planning.

- 88% of the students reported that they understood the objectives of their courses.
- 89% thought their courses were well organized.
- 84% said their courses held their interest until they finished. We'll work on that.

Instructional materials.

- 90% felt their study guides helped them to achieve course objectives.
- 90% judged their study guides to be clearly written.
- 88% believed their study guides and texts were up to date. Much has recently been done in this area.
- 92% thought the time required to complete a lesson was reasonable.
- 93% said that after reading the assignments they knew what to do.
- 92% felt their assignments were of definite instructional value.

Here is the average number of hours the students reported it took to complete a written assignment.



Teaching and examinations.

- 83% reported that their instructors made helpful comments on their assignments. We think this should be higher, and are encouraging more extensive instructional comments.
- 79% said their instructors motivated them to do their best work. This is another area that deserves the attention of some instructors.
- 90% felt their lessons were graded promptly. (Our standard is a "lesson turnaround time" of ten days or less; most students agree that this promptness helps fuel motivation and promotes learning.)
- 81% thought the examinations tested the most important aspects of their courses. This should be higher, but it also is a fact that students are not often enthusiastic about their exams.
- 90% reported that they understood the standards for determining course grades.

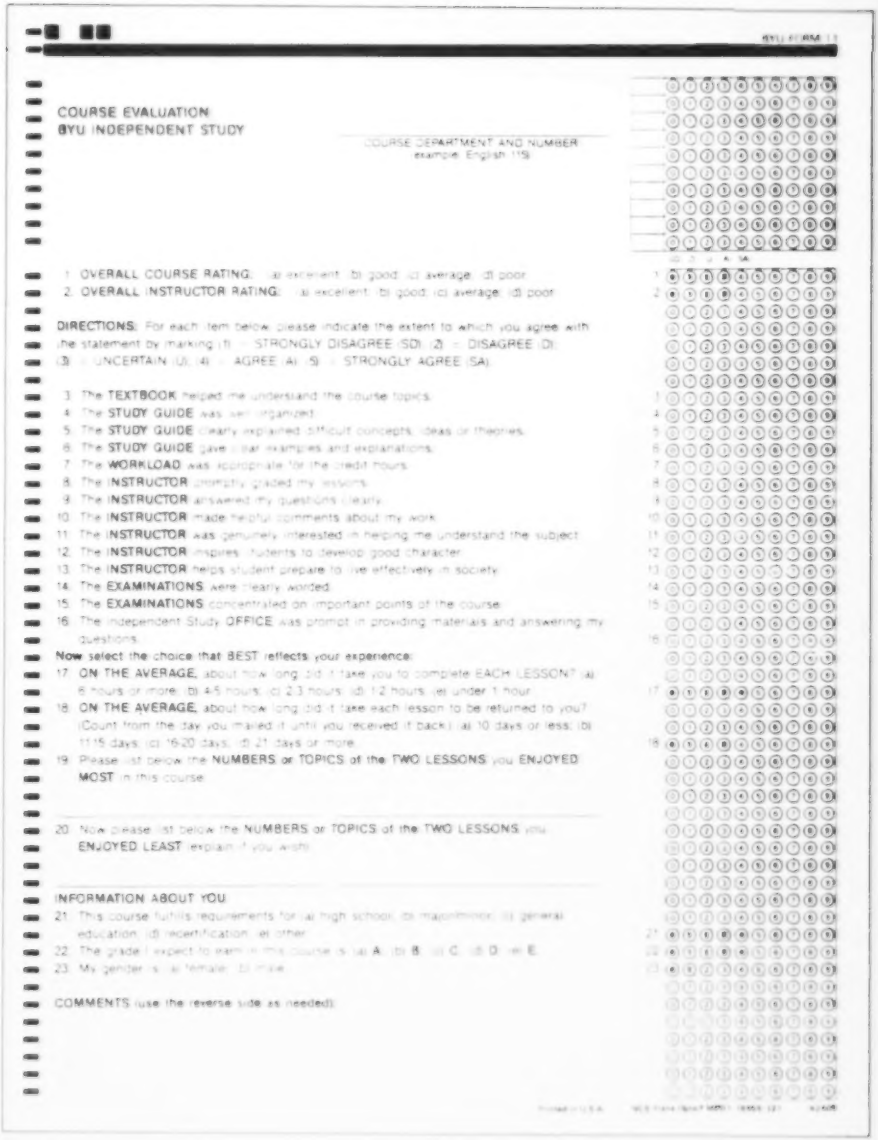
Educational services.

- 97% of the students who registered by mail reported their materials were sent promptly.
- 99% of all students registering by mail reported their materials arrived in good condition.
- 97% said that the Independent Study employees they encountered were courteous.
- 94% of those calling or writing on administrative matters reported that they received efficient service. (Great, since 63% reported needing administrative information or help at some time during their courses.)

Enrollment information

- 99% felt that their courses were accurately described in pre-registration information.
- 89% reported that they would recommend independent study to their friends. (In fact, over 41% said that they "strongly agreed" with recommending our courses to their friends.)

Students tended to be satisfied in all areas surveyed, and those who had a high opinion of any area were nearly unanimous in having a positive view of all areas. There was no correlation between length of time to do an assignment and opinions about independent study.



COURSE EVALUATION
BYU INDEPENDENT STUDY

COURSE DEPARTMENT AND NUMBER
example: English 115

1. OVERALL COURSE RATING: (a) excellent (b) good (c) average (d) poor
2. OVERALL INSTRUCTOR RATING: (a) excellent (b) good (c) average (d) poor

DIRECTIONS: For each item below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement by marking (1) = STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD), (2) = DISAGREE (D), (3) = UNCERTAIN (U), (4) = AGREE (A), (5) = STRONGLY AGREE (SA).

3. The TEXTBOOK helped me understand the course topics.
4. The STUDY GUIDE was well organized.
5. The STUDY GUIDE clearly explained difficult concepts, ideas or theories.
6. The STUDY GUIDE gave clear examples and explanations.
7. The WORKLOAD was appropriate for the credit hours.
8. The INSTRUCTOR promptly graded my lessons.
9. The INSTRUCTOR answered my questions clearly.
10. The INSTRUCTOR made helpful comments about my work.
11. The INSTRUCTOR was genuinely interested in helping me understand the subject.
12. The INSTRUCTOR inspires students to develop good character.
13. The INSTRUCTOR helps student prepare to live effectively in society.
14. The EXAMINATIONS were clearly worded.
15. The EXAMINATIONS concentrated on important points of the course.
16. The Independent Study OFFICE was prompt in providing materials and answering my questions.

Now select the choice that BEST reflects your experience:

17. ON THE AVERAGE, about how long did it take you to complete EACH LESSON? (a) 6 hours or more (b) 4-5 hours (c) 2-3 hours (d) 1-2 hours (e) under 1 hour
18. ON THE AVERAGE, about how long did it take each lesson to be returned to you? (Count from the day you mailed it until you received it back.) (a) 10 days or less (b) 11-15 days (c) 16-20 days (d) 21 days or more
19. Please list below the NUMBERS or TOPICS of the TWO LESSONS you ENJOYED MOST in this course.

20. Now please list below the NUMBERS or TOPICS of the TWO LESSONS you ENJOYED LEAST (explain if you wish).

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

21. This course fulfills requirements for (a) high school, (b) major/minor, (c) general education, (d) recertification, (e) other
22. The grade I expect to earn in this course is (a) A, (b) B, (c) C, (d) D, (e) E
23. My gender is (a) female, (b) male

COMMENTS (use the reverse side as needed):

DO NOT WRITE HERE

Ohio University Independent Study Course Evaluation

COURSE _____ INSTRUCTOR _____ DATE _____

To the Student: In order to make our courses and study guides as interesting and educationally profitable as possible, we would like to see your comments and criticism. We are especially concerned with keeping our study guides effective and in promoting helpful communication between instructor and student. Your instructor will be given these comments only after the final grade has been submitted. Return this form unsigned with your final examination.*

I. STUDY GUIDE

A. Was the study guide well organized?

B. Were the directions concise and clear?

C. Did the discussion section, the instructor's narrative comments, supplement the text adequately and assist you with the textbooks?

D. Were the reading assignments adequate? Too long? Too short?

E. Were the written assignments clear and specific?

F. Did the written work prepare you for the examinations?

G. If there were either visual or auditory materials (graphs, charts, slides, cassettes), did they assist you with the course? How would they have been helpful if included?

H. How would you improve the study guide if you were revising it?

II. EXAMINATIONS

A. Were the examinations a reflection of the material covered in the texts and study guide?

B. Were you prepared by the instructional materials (study guide, texts, etc.) for the type of examinations taken in the course?

C. Did the lesson objectives, if included, assist you in preparing for the exams?

D. How would you improve the examinations for this course?

III. TEXTBOOKS

A. Were the textbooks adequate for self-study and did they cover the material satisfactorily?

B. Was supplemental reading suggested or required, and if so, was it valuable? Would supplemental reading have helped you with the course?

IV. INSTRUCTOR

A. Was the instructor prompt in returning lessons?

B. Were the instructor's comments on written assignments helpful?

C. If you were teaching this course for self-study students, how would you improve communication between yourself and your students?

*Note: If you need more space for your comments, please use the back of this form or attach another piece of paper. You may make any additional comments you wish. Thank you.